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Gray Area Spotlight: David Penn



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

David Penn



SPAIN

“I was always really influenced by soul and funk. My father played a lot of older music like Stevie Wonder, Jackson 5, Earth Wind and Fire. That's where a lot of my early inspirations came from. I think this had a big impact on my sound. When I want to make house music I always try to take something organic from the past to keep the harmonies going and create songs rather than just creating club tracks.”

It's an accurate self assesment. The Defected Records mainstay is known for upbeat, soul and funk-driven house music. David Penn keeps the vibes happy and uplifting at all times, spreading his unique brand of house music globally. 



Ain't Got No
David Penn, KPD





A true veteran of the scene, David began his career in Spain, in the early 90s. From 1992-1999 he produced music under a different moniker. Although he loved electronic music he was not a DJ.

“Once I started to DJ I had a better understanding of what I wanted to make. I wanted to take my own path. It’s amazing it’s been so many years, especially when the EDM boom happened. I was surprised we came out of that. I’m happy that people know me from 20 years ago and are still discovering me.”

Growing up in Spain, David Penn struggled initially to discover his musical identity. There were not many DJs and producers making the kind of music that he felt an affinity for. Although Ibiza was always a great place for him, mainland Spain did not provide the same type of inspiration. As he got more into DJing and producing, he found himself thinking about the rest of Europe and influences from other places.

“During the two years of lockdown, it’s more apparent than ever that it’s a different era. My style is more European than Spanish in particular. I have some Latin influences and Soul influences. There are more new DJs now in Spain but there’s not a huge bank making house. People here usually make techno or tech house. I sometimes felt like someone in the wrong country. My style is much more international. Some of my best sets have happened in Miami and South America.”



Hipcats

ATF David Penn

0:00



David has long been aware of the sense that his music is not necessarily the most popular in his home country. At the start of his career, he experienced difficulty getting his music out to his international fan base. Although we are now able to access any song at any time, it’s easy to forget that only a few years ago, finding music was a true endeavor. David founded his record label, Urbana Records in 2003 to keep up with demand. When he released music in the US, his European fans couldn't find it and vice versa. He determined that creating a label would give him an outlet to both release music whenever he wanted, and to make it simple for anyone, anywhere to hear his records.

“I don’t really use it like a business, the label is for me to put music on that I think is interesting. My records usually chart so having them out on my label, it’s nice to see.”

Although Urbana Records has had tremendous success, David Penn cannot simply be contained to one label. His immense output, and tremendous charting success led to a long held relationship with the iconic Defected Records.

“I’ve been releasing music with them for a long time. When the EDM boom happened music just changed a lot... I didn’t like the music I was listening to and everyone was remembering my old tracks but I wanted to create some new identity for myself... My music is normally energetic and happy so I tried to follow my instinct and luckily Defected called me to have me back over and over.”

Although he first released with Defected many years ago, their continued belief in David has given him a second wind. He readily admits that he is feeling more comfortable now than he ever has with his music. Decades of success have left him feeling that he can truly express himself and trust his instincts musically. Having the power to decide what to do and what not to do based on inspiration rather than financial need, has been a blessing for David. As he continues to create new fans, David has taken plenty of time to reflect on how much his career has been able to grow in recent years.

“Many of us early on were doing well but no one was famous or anything like that. People knew the music and booked us but there was no celebrity to it. Now with how easy it is to access music, the reach of your career is just so much higher. I feel like in the last few years, people come to my shows more and more to see me rather than just going to a club to go. In the start of the pandemic I was happy to spend more time at home and in the studio but now I’ve been so eager to play live shows and I feel amazing getting back out there.”



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